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Teacher EDUCATION
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EDUCATION POLICY: FROM LEGISLATURES TO CLASSROOMS
EDUC 350/550, POST 340, Spring 2016
Wednesdays 6:00-9:00 pm
Location: HBH 427

Instructor: Scott Hochberg
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For additional information, please also see the Course Information document on Owlspace.

Schedule and Assignments

UPDATED 4/8/16

Please note: Topics to be covered and when they are covered may vary due to the activities of the Texas Legislature and courts, the specific interests of the students, opportunities for guest speakers, etc. The schedule may also be changed to provide sufficient time for class participation depending on the number of students enrolled in the class.

All assignments are to be considered tentative until assigned by the instructor in class.

1/13 **Introduction to Education Legislation**

- Opening Impressions
- Who's in charge here? Who makes education policy, and who influences them?
- Legislative simulation. Students will play roles of various interests in arguing for or against proposed legislation related to special education policy.
- How does the Texas Legislature work and how do you find information about what they are doing?
- Introduce bill report assignment – select a bill from the grab bag.

Task:
All students **must** have a criminal background check for the in-school observations that will occur in February. If you took an education course in Fall 2015 and completed a criminal

background check, you do not need to complete another. Otherwise, please complete this task as soon as possible, so your school visit will not be delayed.

To initiate a criminal background check, please click the link shown in the class Resources folder on Owlspace.

Reading Assignment (General Folder):
Kinder Education Report Post 5 takeaways to Forum by 11:59 pm on Tuesday before the next class. (Due 1/19)

Class Presentation Assignment (Due 1/20 or 1/27, depending on drawing):
You have been assigned a bill to review and present.

- Figure out what the bill does, why it was proposed (without asking anyone in the legislature or their staff), what obstacles it may have faced.
- Consider:
    - Who proposed the bill and where is the district they are from? How does it reflect the author's political philosophy, if applicable?
    - What are the characteristics of the school districts that this member represents and do those district characteristics relate to why this member proposed this bill?
    - Did they propose it or something like it in previous sessions?
    - What will it cost?
    - Who are groups for or against it and why?
    - How did the bill change as it went through the process?
- Prepare a short presentation (5 minutes) about the bill for the class.
- Approx ½ of the class will present on 1/20, the other half on 1/27.

1/20 **Introduction to Education Legislation - continued**

- Finish discussing seclusion exercise.
- Discuss Kinder Study.
- Class Presentations on legislation.

Curriculum Wars -- What gets taught to whom, who decides, and how do they decide?

- Introduce overall curriculum battles
    - A National Curriculum vs State/Local Decisions
    - Experts vs democracy
    - What the Texas State Board of Education does

Video Assignment (Curriculum Wars Folder):
View "The Revisionaries", a documentary about the State Board of Education's curriculum adoption process. Runtime is approx 1 hr 23 mins. Post 5 takeaways to Forum by the end of Tuesday before the next class. (Due 1/26)

Class Participation Assignment (Due 1/27): Read "The State of State Standards— and the Common Core —in 2010", pp 1-32 plus the section for your state. (Curriculum Wars Folder) Be prepared to discuss how your state was rated in this report.

Class Participation Assignment (Due 1/27): Compare the Common Core Curriculum for a particular subject and grade level to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for the same subject and grade (Curriculum Wars Folder). How are they similar or different? You might want to compare such things as difficulty, level of detail, clarity, bias toward or against particular teaching philosophy (e.g. phonics vs. whole language), coherence with other grade levels, etc. Be prepared to present what you find.

1/27 **Introduction to Education Legislation - continued**

- Continue Class Presentations on legislation.

Curriculum Wars – continued

- The battle over course content
  - Discuss "The Revisionaries"
  - Who should decide who is "right"?
  - Discuss Social Studies dispute.
  - Watch clips from SBOE (23 mins)
  - Amount of detail
  - Discuss Core Curriculum differences from Texas (from assignments)
  - Watch video of bill banning use of Common Core in Texas (10 min)
  - Discuss what you would want to know to evaluate one curriculum against another.

Writing Assignment (Due 2/3):
Texas is one of a small number of states not participating in the Common Core Standards initiative. Texas law goes so far as to prohibit use of the Common Core, stating that "A school district may not use common core state standards to comply with the requirement to provide instruction in the essential knowledge and skills at appropriate grade levels."

Yet some argue that the Texas system for adopting curriculum is slow, expensive, and overly politicized.

Assume that you are a member of the State Board of Education, and are tasked with deciding whether Texas should adopt the Common Core Curriculum, or any part of it? What would you

decide and why? Choose a position and justify it with, to the extent possible, evidence from objective research, including, but not limited to, the materials that have been assigned. Some things to consider:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Common Core?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Texas TEKS?
- Would adopting the Common Core, or some part of it, strengthen or weaken the Texas curriculum?
- What would the cost be of adopting the Common Core, and would the benefit be worth the cost? How do you know?
- What other "necessaries" must be in place for the Common Core, or any curriculum, to lead to improved learning?

Some Resources for Writing Assignment (Curriculum Wars Folder):

- Mississippi Legislative Report Supporting the Common Core
- Against the Common Core – Hoover Institution
- The "Common Core" Standards Initiative: An Effective Reform Tool?
- Common Core in the Districts – An Early Look at Early Implementers
- (You may use any other resources if you choose.)

2/3 **Curriculum Wars – continued**

- Discuss writing assignment – finish common core discussions.
- The battle over graduation requirements
    - Discuss school graduation requirements.
    - Class exercise – Algebra II EOC
    - Watch debate over Texas graduation requirements, and discuss
- Discuss who the requirements should serve.

Presentation re upcoming school visits with department grad students

School Visits:
Bellaire High School, per individual student schedule, 2/8. 2/9 or 2/10.

2/10 **Discussion of School Visits**

Debrief from school visits. What did you learn, what policy implications might there be?

Accountability - How do we know the curriculum gets taught, and that students learn?

"Rarely is the question asked: Is our children learning?"
Governor George W. Bush, Jan. 11, 2000.

- Accountability Overview
- Discussion of Texas' current accountability system - what do the numbers mean?

Reading Assignments:
The Signal and the Noise. Read Intro and Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8. Post 5 takeaways to Forum by the end of **Sunday** before class. (Due 2/14)

"The Un-Lobbyists" and "The Lobbyists Lament" (Lobbying Folder). Short prep pieces for Ms. Ford's presentation.

2/17 **DATE CHANGE TO 2/15 Room HBH 22 (on basement level)**

Guest Speaker – Ms. Victoria Ford, K&L Gates, Austin. The role of professional lobbyists in policymaking.

Discuss "The Signal and the Noise"

Accountability Issues – Continued

- Big Data gone awry – The Texas Projection Measure

Task:
Prepare a description of your topic for your final paper. The final paper will be a study of a particular policy question. The paper should describe the issue, propose a course of action (which could include keeping the status quo), present evidence supporting the action, and discuss the likely supporters and opponents to the proposal and how opposition might be overcome. As examples, some excellent papers from previous classes have been posted to Owlspace. (Due 2/24)

Reading Assignments:

- "Avoidable Losses: High-Stakes Accountability and the Dropout Crisis"
- "Does School Accountability Lead to Increased Student Performance?"
  Post 5 takeaways (total for both readings) to Forum by the end of Tuesday before class. (Due 2/23)

2/24 **Life In Schools (Brockman 101)**

This program is presented once each semester by Rice Teacher Education, and students in the program are required to attend. After attending the program, our class will reconvene for the remainder of the class period. Pizza will be provided for those who arrive by 6 pm.

Accountability Issues – Continued

- Do accountability systems work, and toward what ends
- The end of No Child Left Behind – the new federal Every Child Succeeds Act
- Does every student need to be tested every year?

Writing Assignment: Prepare a game plan for your research paper. Figure out the steps that you plan to follow to determine and justify your conclusion. For example, if you are proposing a new policy, how will you show that the policy is likely to have the desired outcome? What data and other information will you need, and how will you find and evaluate supporting and opposing arguments? The assignment can be done in outline, flowchart, or normal written form. It should be detailed enough that you could give it to a researcher and he/she could follow it and gather the information you need. Grading will be based on coverage of the topic and thoroughness. (Due 3/9)

3/2 **SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**

3/9 **Funding our Schools**

- Does money matter?
- What does education cost and why is there no single answer to that?
    - student effects
    - other differential cost
- Class exercise – cost examples
- Where does the money come from?
    - Types of taxes, characteristics of each
    - Implications of a local property tax based system
    - Class exercise –local tax examples
    - show real world examples
- How does the state system interact?
    - Class exercise – state/local sharing examples

Reading assignments (School Finance folder):

- Edgewood v Kirby, 1989
- Dietz Ruling Executive Summary

  Post 5 takeaways (total for both readings) to Forum by the end of Tuesday before class. (Due 3/15)

3/16 **Funding our Schools - Continued**

- The recapture solution
- Where does the system fall short, and why is it so hard to fix?
- The schools turn to the courts – Discussion of Texas school finance cases.
    - Is the system efficient?
    - Is the system suitable?
    - Does the system represent an illegal statewide property tax?
- Update on current court case

Reading and Class Presentation Assignment (Special Populations Folder) (Due 3/23):
We will divide the class into three groups, each to read materials about one of these three areas and present the issues to the class. The presentation duties for each group should be shared among the group's members.

Each group will be given time in class on 3/23 (1/2 hour if needed?) to work together to combine the group's thoughts for the panel presentation. Forum space will be provided on Owlspace to discuss your main points and takeaways with your other group members, but grading will be on the panel discussions, not the individual takeaways.

Each discussion should start out with basic information about the population being discussed. For example, what percentage of students are involved, how are they identified, etc. This may require some research outside of the assigned readings.

- **Gifted/talented:**
  - Excellence at the Cost of Social Justice? Negotiating and Balancing Priorities in Gifted Education
  - Ability Grouping – It's not just tracking any more
  - Universal Access to a Quality Education

- **English as a second language:**
  - Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion (This is an introductory brief, so it would be good to read first.)
  - Bilingual Education – the Hispanic Response to Unequal Educational Opportunity
  - A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students' Long-Term Academic Achievement (Read: Executive Summary, Purpose, and Findings from a Large Urban Research Site. You might also want to review the findings from another research site to look for similarities and differences.)

- **Students with disabilities:**
  - When it's your own child – A Report on Special Education from the Families Who Use It
  - Special Education: Its Ethical Dilemmas, Entitlement, Status, and Suggested Systemic Reforms
  - Review of Special Education in the Houston Independent School District

3/23 **Does One Size Fit All? – Special Populations**

- General overview of special populations – what are various categories, how large a percentage of the student population, etc.
- **Class presentations** – policy issues re special populations

Reading assignments (Discipline folder):

- Teaching Interrupted.pdf (Read this one first)
- What Conditions Jeopardize and Support Safety in Urban Schools.pdf
- The Punishment Gap School Suspension and Racial Disparities in Achievement.pdf
- HISD Code of Conduct (Just scan – for reference only, just to get a feel for its level of detail and complexity)

Post at least 5 takeaways (total) for the first 3 articles to Forum by the end of Tuesday before class. (Due 3/29)

3/30 **School Discipline – Is there a "school-to-prison pipeline" and does it matter?**

- zero tolerance policies
- expulsion and suspension, alternative schools
- ticketing of students for school offenses
- impact on special populations

Reading assignments (Teacher Issues folder):

- Effects o f Teacher Qualifications on Student Achievement in Middle School Mathematics in Texas – through page 16
  (I'm more interested in you reading the broad literature review portion of this study than the actual study itself, which is on a narrow question.)
- Teach for America – A Review of the Evidence
- Beyond Teacher Reassignments

Post 5 takeaways (total for all readings) to Forum by the end of Tuesday before class. (Due 4/5)

4/6 **Special Populations - Continued**

Guest Speaker – Mr. Dustin Rynders, Supervising Attorney, Disability Rights Texas. Special Ed from the advocates viewpoint.

Dustin Rynders is the Supervising Attorney of the Education Team at Disability Rights Texas , which is a nonprofit law firm and member of the federally authorized Protection and Advocacy (P&A) network. He supervises a team of attorneys and advocates throughout Texas, who represent students with disabilities and their parents in disputes with school districts. His own cases have focused largely on issues faced by youth with disabilities who are also involved in the juvenile justice and child protection systems. Dustin received a Bachelor of Arts from Pepperdine University, cum laude, a M.P.Aff. from the L.B.J. School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, and a J.D. from The University of Houston Law Center.

If Only Every Teacher was a Great Teacher – Where are the great teachers, and how can you tell?

- How to rate and pay teachers. Are student test scores the answer?
- Are the best teachers teaching at the most challenging schools?
- What do we know about alternative training methods, like Teach for America?

Participation Requirement (not graded)

Please post three questions for the legislative process discussion no later than Tuesday, 4/12, or earlier if possible.

Reading Assignment (School Choice Folder) for 4/20:

- America's Public Schools Choice IS a Panacea
- Virtual Schools Study for the State of Georgia
- Strategies for Identifying High-Performing Charter Schools

Post 5 takeaways (total, for three readings) to Forum by the end of Tuesday before class. (Due 4/19 – We will not discuss until 4/20)

4/13 **Funding our schools - Continued**

Guest Speaker – Mr. Mark Trachtenberg, Haynes and Boone. The current Texas school finance lawsuit.

General discussion of the legislative process

Takeaway Assignment

Post 5 takeaways for the entire course to Forum by the end of Tuesday before class (Due 4/19). These will be counted **double** in the takeaway category.

Class Presentation Assignment:

In order for all students to benefit from each others' work on final papers, students will individually present their work to the class. It is understood that the papers may not be complete, but by this time the student should be far enough along to present the topic in an informative manner. Power Points and other visuals may be used but are not required. The instructor may give the student further guidance on the content of the final paper based on the presentation. For grading purposes, these presentations will be one of the student's oral presentations (not part of the grade for the final paper). Presentations should be around 10 minutes, not including some additional time for questions from fellow students.

4/20 **Student Final Paper Presentations.**

Blow up the system – Vouchers, Charters, Virtual Schools, Alternative Governance

- School choice options. Charters/Vouchers/Home Schooling/Magnets/Virtual
- Why do some charters work great and others crash and burn?
- Are school boards the problem? Does democracy and local control really work?

Discuss Final Takeaways

5/4 **Final Papers Due – End of Finals Week – Submit by email no later than 5:00 PM, 5/4/15**